

**Teaching Philosophy**  
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My road to academia began when Dr. JoAnn DiGeorgio-Lutz made a profound and lasting impact on me and my academic life. She inspired me through her limitless enthusiasm for the understanding the theory and subject matter she taught, her commitment to challenge her students to think critically about politics from multiple perspectives, and her varied approaches to teaching. Throughout my undergraduate education at Texas A&M University-Commerce, she served as my mentor, advised my honors thesis, and encouraged me to pursue my doctorate in political science. In the classroom, I emulate and expand on her teaching style by concentrating on four significant principles: diverse teaching methods, critical thinking skills, a discussion-oriented environment, and the development of strong writing skills.

Many theories of education propose that students learn through various mediums. Throughout my experiences as a student, an instructor, a researcher, and during my service in the United States Air Force, I observed that we as humans learn and comprehend subject matter in various manners. Therefore, I incorporate a diverse teaching style to engage my students in their learning experience (e.g. lecture, discussions, debates, and simulations). While I use diverse teaching methods in all classes, I employ a sliding scale approach as the course level increases, my reliance on primarily lecture based approach decreases while my use of discussion increases. In introductory classes, I primarily engage my student using lectures but I also include several exercises where the students discuss and debate pertinent political issues in small groups and express their views through various writing exercises. Moreover, the students continue their interactions with the instructor through weekly thought papers. By the end of the course, the students gain a greater understanding of political actors, institutions, interactions, and processes within government and politics as well as develop and advance their own perceptions concerning political issues. In upper-division courses, I integrate a greater in-depth classroom discussion and debate concerning the assigned readings in order for the students to become scholars and critique the seminal literature regarding the subject. In this manner, the students gain information concerning the respective concepts, develop their own perspectives, analyze and critique the merits and shortcomings of the literature, and participate in a discussion forum with their peers and the instructor.

In the classroom, I foster a positive and stimulating atmosphere that emphasizes diversity and inclusion where students from various backgrounds possessing varying perspectives are able to express their own viewpoints and explore those of their peers. Adhering to adult learning theories which are applicable to college-age student development, I practice an existential learning philosophy which is evident in the classroom learning environment. In order to develop this learning environment, I promote democratic ideals where the students and instructor collaborate to establish ground rules and guidelines designed to promote intellectual freedom and equality. This learning environment contributes to the cultivation of a dynamic interaction between the students and the instructor where the instructor presents the information on the subject matter, promotes critical thinking, and actively engages the students in a classroom discussion. This encourages the students to examine and critique the theories and arguments of current work in political science as well as determine the merits and shortcomings of the seminal literature rather

than merely restating the information presented by the instructor and in the readings. Moreover, this promotes self confidence in the students as they take on the role of a scholar to evaluate the literature. My approach requires that students comprehend the assigned readings and take time to analyze and think critically about the work, determining its strengths and weaknesses. For example, in an upper division course on political violence, I assigned several readings arguing the merits of ethnicity as a causal mechanism for civil conflict. The students engaged in a spirited but congenial discussion and evaluation of the controversial arguments. Ultimately, the students gained a more comprehensive overview of this contentious subject through the experiences and thoughts of their classmates and instructor.

Finally, the maturation of a student's writing skills is an integral aspect of their overall development regardless of the subject or level of the class. In introductory courses, I incorporate multiple exercises that challenge and encourage students to further develop their viewpoints in a concise manner on political topics such as immigration, environmental issues, the death penalty and questions regarding federalism. In upper level courses, students are responsible for writing assignments (e.g. thought papers on the literature and weekly discussions) and case studies where the students examine real world examples to address pertinent political questions. Furthermore, I also incorporate a large scale research project whereby the students analyze a larger question pertaining to the literature. For example, in my course on political violence, each student chose an episode of political violence, examined the conflict, and demonstrated how the selected readings for the course shed light on the event. In my course on comparative politics, the students were assigned to design their own government in which they constructed all aspects of the state, economy, military, and society with justifications for their decisions from the material they learned from the literature. I believe that this emphasis on writing skills, coupled with oratory skills and critical thinking play a critical role in the overall learning and development of the student.